



# 2020

**FIREFIGHTERS  
AND EMS FUND  
VOTER GUIDE**



## WHY VOTING MATTERS

America's firefighters and Emergency Medical Responders represent the most reliable and consistent public safety services in the world. As advocates and informed citizens, we are already aware of that. However, their consistently good results and reliable responses to emergencies have left them taken for granted.

The number of citizens aware of the challenges the fire service is facing has waned, and future generations will need to be even more informed and engaged than before if we are to overcome the challenges facing emergency medical responders today.

We started the Firefighters & EMS Fund to help overcome these challenges. People need to be concerned not only for their own personal health and safety, but also for the well-being of those who respond to emergencies. Younger generations will need to be engaged in order to understand and support ballot measures that keep fire departments equipped with the resources they need to overcome present challenges.

**Nile Porter**  
Executive Director  
Firefighters and EMS Fund

## PRIORITY ISSUES

### Resources, Funding, and Opportunities for Training

Most Americans understand that firefighters have very difficult and technical jobs to perform. What they often aren't aware of is the amount of initial and, most importantly, continuous training and education that is required in order for them to be successful. With the average fire department being under-equipped and understaffed, firefighters often find themselves running from one call to the next, the number of opportunities a firefighter has to sharpen their skills and learn new techniques are too infrequent.

### Funding for Facilities and Equipment

As a firefighter's home base, the station needs to be equipped, not just with the kinds of features that meet the minimum safety standards set by the Occupational Safety Hazards Administration (OSHA), but also accommodations that allow a firefighter to train, rest, and learn. The greatest need firefighters have today is adequate rest. While firefighter fatalities have fallen steadily over the last decade, the number of stress related psychological and cardiac events has skyrocketed. Back-to-back calls and a lack of adequate resources to deal with traumatic experiences have taken their toll on all Emergency Medical Responders and the best way to combat this silent killer is to ensure that facilities have adequate accommodations for firefighters to decompress and recover whenever possible. As fire stations age, their equipment and facilities need to be updated and replaced. Most departments have apparatuses in use beyond their recommended lifecycle, and to make matters worse, their stations do not have the space needed to accommodate the kinds of tools required to perform essential duties of the job in today's world.



## Personal safety of first responders

In recent years, we have seen a rise in the number of first responders being assaulted while trying to assist others. Some locales have seen the number of monthly reports double in recent years and there are no signs of these incidents slowing down. A study conducted by the **Center for Firefighter Injury Research and Safety Trends** states that a department's paramedics are 14 times more likely to suffer assault-related injury than their firefighter peers when controlled for gender. Our elected leaders and prosecutors need to make the personal safety of first responders a bigger priority going forward.

## Knowledgeable and Experienced Fire Commission Members

Fire Commissioners play an integral role in public safety, acting as supervisors for the executives within an agency. They oversee things like the hiring and dismissal of employees, establishing budgets, and can heavily impact the evolution of a department's training process. Fire commissions should be comprised of knowledgeable and experienced individuals who understand the intricacies of the firefighting profession.

Ask the following of the commissioner candidates on your ballot:

- Do they have a background in the fire service? Fire commissioners should be knowledgeable and experienced in the fire service or an adjacent industry to ensure they understand the intricacies of the firefighting profession.
- Have they expressed concern about the well-being of firefighters, paramedics, and first responders? More needs to be done to ensure the personal safety of Emergency Medical Responders, and local leaders who will prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law will help mitigate offences.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Get out and vote! Elect leaders who understand what it takes to be a firefighter or first responder. Consistent and real-world training opportunities, along with adequate and up-to-date equipment are key to having effective fire departments. Emergency Medical Technicians who are well versed in the challenges they will face in an emergency can be the difference between life and death for both the patient and the responder.
- Support ballot measures that will improve or replace facilities and equipment, and pay close attention to when these resources were last updated. Your local fire department will not request more from the community unless it is truly needed. Many departments go years or even decades with the same facilities or equipment, and every request they make should be seriously evaluated.
- Consider who serves on your community's Fire Commission. These individuals have a direct responsibility to ensure your community is protected. Make sure commission members have the knowledge and experience required to make informed decisions.